

A Case study On Land rights of Tribal People in Manipur

Land ownership system in Manipur : A Brief Introduction

Land resource has been the root cause of many conflicts in Manipur and especially in the hills. Land, particularly for the tribal, remained as the single most important physical possession and as a territory plays an important role in shaping the cultural and ethnic identity. Furthermore, the tribal communities have a symbiotic relationship with the land and the forests on which depends their livelihood. All the tribal groups, to an extent followed customary, traditional land usage and management system. As per some scholars the most immediate reasons for the conflict in the villages, inter villages and ethnic conflict between different community is the uncertainty about land ownership, especially the forested hill tracts that covers the major part of the state. In Manipur, out of the 78% of the total forested area 68% is controlled by the community. Differing systems of land ownership and tenure reinforce the accentuated ethnic divide between the people of the plains and the hill tribes.

PESCH Intervention on Land Rights

Land Rights for Farmers

During the intervention of BROT/EED project activities it found the land ownership system is slightly different from village to village. The common practice is land is owned by the community except one project village by a clan. PESCH efforts on this issue are able to ensure land ownership to the farmers and women SHGs in three of the six villages for plantation purposes. In Longchai, Thaucham and Aben villages Deed of Agreement were signed between land owner, VDC, Farmers clubs and the Village Authority as the third party. They were provided 170, 20 and 100 acres of land respectively. It is agreed that the tenant households will be allowed to use the land as long as they continue their farming activity. The main fruit plants are Areca, Litchi and Parkia. This is a big opportunity for the households who own small lands. In Thaucham the farmers club is able to plant at least 5000 Areca saplings in their farm. These group activities of the village improve peaceful co-existence and sense ownership of land for sustainability of their livelihood.

Land rights for women

1. **SHGs Women** : In Aben village the Village Development Committee (VDC) has provided 2 acres of land each to Suisam SHG and Dichunei SHG. Meanwhile Deed of Agreement was signed between the two entities with third party. In fact more than 20 women of these two SHGs are ensured land for permanent cultivation.
2. **Rongmei Tradition** : *Luh Langsang* : In Rongmei tradition women are provided land as gift by her family and the term is called “Luh Langsang”. This tradition has been practiced since time immemorial in the Rongmei society. A remarkable example is one Ms Rangkeliu Kamei of Makuai village was gifted a land by her family. Now the place is known as “Rangkekiulong” village which is derived from her own name. Recently during our project intervention a woman named Mrs Thuankuliu Gonmei of Longchai village was gifted two acres of land by her family for permanent settlement and cultivation. However the changing trend of the society has led to the decline of this practice in the modern Rongmei society.

Conclusion

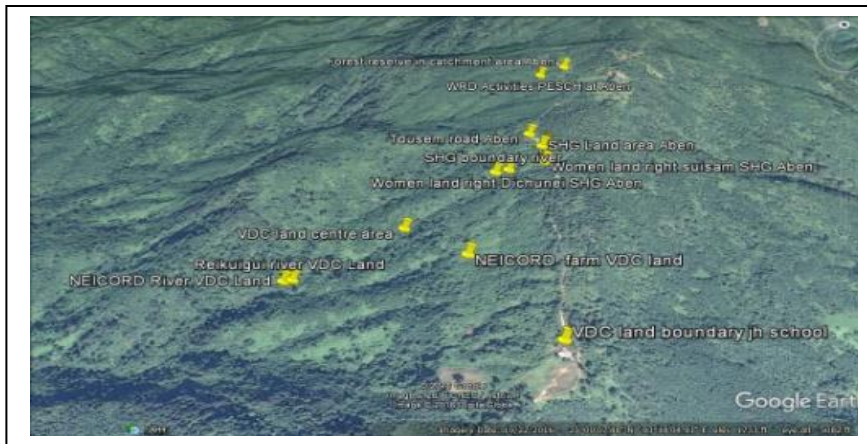
It is a challenging task to ensure land ownership to the people of the rural areas. The reason is owing to the practice of non uniform land ownership system of customary laws and Land Revenue Act of the State Government which bring insecurity to the tribal people.

Meanwhile it is felt that we need to revive and encourage this noteworthy tradition of the Rongmei community for the welfare of women and society as a general.

See annexure in youtube.com-

1. Thoucham farmer club
2. VDC and SHG land report Aben

GPS Map of VDC and SHG land Aben



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